2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

nearer to the sea (Innes, 1908: 270). The temperature varies from 70° to 90° and humidity is always high. Unlike most of the great kingdoms of India, Kerala had no single great river and no extensive, centrally organized irrigation system. Instead, her cultivated crops and lush vegetation depended on the heavy rainfall and numerous small rivers and streams by means of which small-scale irrigation was easily possible to groups of families.

Further, the heavy rainfall, seasonal floods, and hilly terrain made communications difficult until modern times. Before the partial conquest of Kerala by Mysoreans from the northeast in 1766, there were no roads, wheeled vehicles, or pack animals. The kings maintained small cavalry forces only in the coast towns, traveled in palanquins, and employed runners to carry messages to their vassal chiefs. Goods were dragged downstream by elephants, transported in boats, or carried on the backs of men. Armies moved slowly; local nobles sometimes rebelled against their rulers but warfare was abandoned in the heavy southwest monsoon season from May to September. The difficulty of communications and the lack of a centrally organized irrigation system may have been connected with the fact that Kerala had no regular land tax until the 1730's (*ibid.*: 308). Instead, the revenues of her rulers came from tribute in kind supplied by subordinate nobles, and from taxes levied upon overseas trade (Logan, 1951, II: ccxviii; Innes, 1908: 307–308).

In spite of the overseas trade, most of Kerala's villages were traditionally self-sufficient for the basic necessities of life. Quantities of manufactured goods were brought to Kerala's ports from other parts of India for shipment to the Middle East, but indigenous crafts such as weaving, metalwork, pottery, and basketry remained simple and served local needs. Kerala thus had no large urban castes of craftsmen and no indigenous merchant castes, but only immigrant communities of Syrian Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and, later, European merchants and Hindu merchants from other kingdoms of India, all concentrated in the coastal towns. The limited nature of trade and crafts and the comparative self-sufficiency of village life also help to account for the relatively decentralized political structure.

History

Little is known of Kerala until the first century A.D. It then formed part of the kingdom of Chera, whose capital was probably east of the Ghats at Karur on the Kaveri River in the modern Trichinopoly district. Chera, like its companion South Indian kingdoms, Chola and

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
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Pandya, appears to have grown powerful on the basis of trade with Rome. Like Chola and Pandya, it was a Tamil kingdom; Malayalam, the modern language of Kerala, did not diverge from Tamil until about the tenth century (Sastri, 1955: 400). It is clear from the Tamil literature of the Sangam period that the basic features of Kerala's division of labor, caste system and village organization, must have developed during or before the Chera period (*ibid.*: 110–140). The three South Indian kingdoms temporarily disintegrated in the late third century, probably as a result of a sharp decline in Roman trade.

There is no mention of any matrilineal caste like the Nayars in the Chera kingdom. When and whence they came is uncertain. The most plausible suggestion is that during the Chera period they were a matrilineal hill tribe occupying the Ghats under chiefs who owed a tenuous allegiance to the Chera kings. They may have descended to the Kerala plains as invading barbarians about the fourth century, when the Chera kingdom collapsed (Ayyar, 1938: 43). Little is known of Kerala between the Chera period and the thirteenth century. All or a part of it passed under the rule of a succession of viceroys (Perumals) from various South Indian kingdoms to the east of the Ghats. The date of the last Perumal is quite uncertain. Many writers concur in placing him in the early ninth century, but he may possibly have lived as late as the thirteenth. Nayar chiefs and Nayar soldiers are first mentioned in three copperplate inscriptions, tentatively dated late seventh, mid-eighth, and early ninth centuries. The inscriptions record grants of land and judicial privileges on the coast to settlements of Jewish and Syrian Christian traders (Logan, 1887, I: 265). The grants were made by rulers of Kerala, presumably Perumals, and were witnessed by Nayar chiefs of Venad, Ernad, Walluvanad, and Palghat. All these districts were famous Nayar chiefdoms in the later periods and persisted until the eighteenth century. The plates suggest that Nayar chiefs with private armies had emerged as vassals of the Perumals at least by the ninth century. By the mid-thirteenth century, at the latest, the greater Nayar chiefs had become independent small kings, and the Perumals had disappeared.

Chinese had resumed trade with Kerala sometime in the Perumal period, and in the thirteenth century this trade greatly expanded under the empire of Kubla Khan. Concomitantly, two coastal Nayar chiefdoms with strategic ports expanded into small kingdoms by conquering the surrounding inland chiefdoms and monopolizing their trade. In the north was the Kolattiri kingdom centered about Mount Eli, and in the south the kingdom of Travancore or Venad, centered

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175 about Quilon (Ricci, 1931: 328–330; Logan, 1951, I: 282–283). Chi-
439 nese trade declined in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries,
635 but that of Muslim Arabs (who had visited the coast from the eighth century) greatly increased. In the fourteenth century a third Nayar kingdom around Calicut, in the center of the coast, had expanded with the help of Arab merchants (Major, 1857: 13–18). By the time the Portuguese arrived, in 1498, Calicut practically monopolized the Arab trade, and the Zamorin (king) of Calicut held overlordship from Pudupattanam south to Porakkad (Logan, 1951, I: 293–294; Ayyar, 1938: 273, 291). Trickles of trade continued in Kolattunad and Travancore, but the kings there had grown weak by comparison with the Zamorin. Kolattunad had become divided into three virtually independent little kingdoms, and the Travancore ruler had surrendered large powers to the subordinate local chiefs of his realm. Two other small kingdoms remained independent in the interior to the east of Calicut: Walluvanad and Palghat.

The period 1498 to 1792 was one of bitter struggle between Euro-
175 pean and Middle Eastern powers, who formed shifting alliances with
439 native rulers for control of the pepper trade. By 1600 the Portuguese
●648 had practically abolished the Arab trade, but they were themselves driven from the coast by the Dutch in 1663. The English reached Kerala in 1615 and the French in 1725. Each European trading power allied itself with one or another Nayar ruler and took part in successive battles until, in 1766, the northern half of the coast was overrun by Muslim armies from Mysore to the northeast. The Mysorean occupation ended in 1792 with the settlement of the whole area by the English East India Company and the establishment of the British bureaucratic political system (Logan, 1951, I: 404–473).

175 Shortly before the Mysorean invasions Kerala was divided into nine
648 small kingdoms and a number of border chiefdoms owing only ten-
635 uous allegiance to some king. The British after 1792 amalgamated the seven northern kingdoms (Kolattunad, Kottayam, Kurumbranad, Kadattunad, Calicut, Walluvanad, and Palghat) to form the Malabar District of Madras Province, pensioned their rulers, and brought them under a British district officer responsible to the government of Madras. Cochin, a small kingdom in the center of the coast, remained a native state under its own ruler subject to the advice of a British Resident. So also did the southernmost kingdom of Travancore, whose ruler had already in the 1730's established a standing army, dispossessed his Nayar nobles, and formed a bureaucratic government. Kerala remained divided in this way until after the in-

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wil Kerala A Wil
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dependence of India in 1947. Cochin and Travancore were amalgamated in 1949 and, under popular pressure for the formation of linguistic states, the whole area was reunited as the State of Kerala in 1956. This state elected a Communist government in 1957.

After 1498 there were certain changes in Kerala's economy. Trade and towns expanded, gunpowder was introduced and wars became more devastating, and cash transactions became more prevalent among the aristocratic castes in villages (K. M. Panikkar, 1929: chap. XIV). But the basic form of the caste system and the pyramidal system of kingdoms, subordinate chiefdoms, and villages persisted with little change until after the Mysorean conquest. The Calicut kingdom gradually declined after 1498, for the Portuguese allied themselves with the small kingdom of Cochin to the south, freed it from Calicut's overlordship, and used it as a base from which to expel the Arabs and subdue the Zamorins. Nevertheless, with fluctuating boundaries Calicut remained the most powerful kingdom until the 1730's.

Although its internal political boundaries have shifted continually, Kerala is today still divisible into three major cultural areas. These are distinguished by differences in the names and numbers of the castes who occupy them, in dress, dietetic habits and ritual practices, and in the kinship systems of the several Hindu castes. The northern area, north of the Kora River, comprises the former kingdoms of Nileswaram, Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad. This was the area dominated by the Kolattiri kings in the fourteenth century and at various periods thereafter. In British times it became the northern part of Malabar District and the southern part of South Canara District; I shall call it North Kerala. The central area comprises the former kingdoms of Calicut, Walluvanad, Palghat, and Cochin. It was overrun by the Zamorins of Calicut at various times between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. In British times it formed South Malabar District and Cochin State; I shall refer to it as Central Kerala. All the southern area (until recently, Travancore State) was at one time or another subordinate to the kings of Travancore. The political systems—and consequently the internal caste divisions of the Nayars and the forms of their kinship systems—differed in these three areas. Much confusion has arisen in the past because of failure to distinguish between the three regions. It has been assumed that the Nayars had one kinship system, whereas in fact they had three, with different terminological structures. In this paper I describe Nayar kinship in two kingdoms of Central Kerala: Calicut and Cochin.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
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613 178 Theoretically, office-bearing lineages were supposed to cohere forever, the officer being the eldest man of the lineage regardless of branch. In fact, if the lineage continued to expand, some other development would occur within a few generations. What its pattern might be depended on the economic and political circumstances of the times. One pattern was for the political office itself to become divided between the segments some time after they had divided their private domain. The head of each segment would then become ruler in his own right over a portion of the original territory, either (in the case of royals) as an independent small king, or (in the case of district chiefs) as a small chief independent of the rest of his lineage but still owing nominal allegiance to the original king of the kingdom as a whole. This type of fission of offices took place in areas and periods in which for some reason trade was declining, customs dues were running low, and neither king nor chiefs could muster enough extra wealth to fight wars which would maintain them in full political control. This 613 178 175 process went on apace from the fifteenth century to the end of the seventeenth both in Kolattunad and in Travancore, the northernmost and southernmost kingdoms of Kerala. They had been powerful 648 kingdoms for a period, with the help of Chinese traders, but declined in the fifteenth century after the Chinese trade collapsed and the Arabs built up Calicut. After 1500, different trading powers supported the smaller chiefs of these areas in trade wars against each other, so that these kingdoms remained weak and disunited until the second quarter of the eighteenth century. During this period segments of the royal lineages in both kingdoms carved up much of each kingdom into virtually independent chiefdoms. Within each of these in turn, the lineages of formerly subordinate Nayar chiefs tended also to break into segments, each retaining control over four or five villages. Early in the eighteenth century the British and French each tried to consolidate North Malabar by allying themselves with different local powers, but their struggles were temporarily eclipsed by invasions from Bednur to the north and later, in the 1760's, from Mysore in the east. In Travancore the process of disintegration persisted until the British obtained a trade monopoly and, in the 1730's, helped the king to reconquer his kingdom once and for all and to establish a bureaucratic form of rule (Innes, 1908: 55–75; Pillai, 1940: 266–466; K. M. Panikkar, 1931: chap. V).

613 669 The other course of development was for one branch of a ruling lineage to seize the office and most of the private domains and, temporarily or permanently, exclude or banish the others. This process

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took place in areas and periods where one trading power was in the ascendant and wished to support a strong ruler with taxes, arms, and shipping, and through him to gain a monopoly of the pepper trade. Such maneuvers went on continually in the Cochin lineage during the period of European trade. In the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century the Cochin lineage disintegrated into five property groups. The Zamorins to the north, who were expanding with Arab aid, supported the Mutta ("Elder") branch, installed its head as king, and made him feudatory to Calicut. When the Portuguese arrived in 1500 they took up the cause of the Elaya ("Younger") branch, installed them as kings, and ousted the Elder branch and the Zamorin. By 1656 the Younger branch was dying out, as were the three other branches, and only the Elder branch had members available for adoption. Instead of allowing the king to adopt from the Elder branch as they should by custom have done, the Portuguese forced him to adopt from an unrelated lineage, the Rajas of Bettem, who ruled between Cochin and Calicut and who had just defected to the side of Cochin. The Elder branch then sought the help of the Zamorin and the Dutch, and defeated the Cochin Raja and the Portuguese in the war of 1600. The Dutch ousted the Portuguese from Cochin port and installed the Elder branch as their protégés on the throne. Despite such machinations, the Cochin kingdom never became permanently *divided* between branches of the royal lineage, because the office of kingship, supported by one or another merchant power, retained sufficient funds, equipment, and men to restore control over the whole.

The Zamorin's lineage was unusual in that from at least the thirteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries it apparently did not greatly expand in numbers or divide into separate property groups. Indeed it several times almost died out and in 1705 had to adopt from the Nileswaram lineage, an offshoot of Kolattiri. There were therefore no dynastic wars in Calicut. Even had there been, however, it is safe to say that they would always have culminated in the supremacy of one branch and not in division of the kingdom. This was because throughout the period the Calicut port remained great. With the help of one trading power after another the kingship remained strong and, except for border losses, was able to maintain central judicial control and a system of differentiated political offices within the heart of the kingdom.

Within the Calicut kingdom, which was the strongest until the mid-eighteenth century, dynastic disputes among the district chiefs were usually settled by the king. Succession to district chiefship and to vil-

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

634 613 635 622 726 Succession to district chiefship and to village headships had to be ratified by the king and he could if necessary dispossess disaffected branches and exclude them from office. This was true in the heart of the kingdom. Between Calicut and Cochin, the Zamorins' perpetual enemy, lay several small chiefdoms ruled by formerly independent Kshattriya lineages owing only a tenuous allegiance to one or the other side. In the perennial wars between Calicut and Cochin disaffected branches of these lineages frequently changed sides.

622 635 634 613 Village headmen's lineages, again, had their successions confirmed by the chief or king to whom they owed immediate allegiance. When a property group divided into segments, the tendency seems to have been for the branch having the senior member to retain the ancestral house, the office, and most of the village domain. The king or chief sometimes installed a discarded branch of such a lineage in a vacant office elsewhere, if the office-bearing lineage of that village had died out. His power to do this rested on the fact that an office-bearing lineage which was dying out could not adopt without the consent of the officer of next higher rank. Lopped branches of village headmen's lineages which lost their domains and office seem to have reverted in time to the caste rank of retainer Nayars.

613 554 In most of the royal lineages and many of the chiefly lineages there existed the institution of *sthānams*. These were titles carrying separate estates and sometimes subordinate political offices for the men next in seniority to the ruler, irrespective of branch. The Zamorin's lineage had five sthānams. The first was the Zamorin who had palaces at Calicut and Ponnani. Second came a *sthāni* (title holder) who ruled as chief of Nedunganad, a large chiefdom near the southern boundary whose former ruler had been conquered and executed. The third sthāni regularly patrolled the southern frontier with an army. The fourth and fifth had no political offices but lived on separate estates. The rest of the lineage occupied one or more palaces in Calicut. When a sthāni died, those next below him in age rank all moved up one place. The ruling lineages of Kolattunad, Walluvanad, and Palghat each had five sthānis and many of the lesser chiefs had two or three. Cochin had no sthānis other than the king, but originally the eldest male of the lineage retired into celibacy while the second ruled as [648] king. When the Portuguese came they abolished this rule and installed the king themselves.

[182] When a ruling lineage was financially and militarily strong, sthānams strengthened its rule and helped it to cohere for a longer time than it might otherwise have done. They lifted the senior men out of their

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

Nayar: North Kerala

The Nayars of North Kerala live between the Chandragiri and the Kora rivers. This area lay north of the Calicut kingdom and had been conquered by the Kolattiri kings at some period before the fourteenth century (Logan, 1951, I: 283; Innes, 1908: 57). It then disintegrated into the small kingdoms of Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad. North Kerala was invaded from the Bednur kingdom of South Canara in the 1730's. It was later occupied by Muslim armies from Mysore between 1766 and 1792, after which it passed under British rule (Logan, 1951, I: 360, 399–473). This account deals with conditions before 1760, so far as these are known, and with the major changes of the nineteenth century.

Ecology

The mountains approach nearer to the sea in North Kerala than in Central Kerala. There are fewer stretches of lowland suitable for wet-rice cultivation, and gardens of fruits, nuts, vegetables, and spices on hillsides are more extensive. Since rice was the main subsistence crop, population density was lower than in Central Kerala. The houses of a village (*dēsam*) were scattered in gardens on hillsides surrounding a wet-rice flat in a valley. Villages were often separated by three to six miles of uncultivated scrub or jungle. Until the Mysoreans built roads after the 1760's, transport and communication by narrow mountain paths were difficult, especially in the heavy monsoons.

North Kerala had four major ports during the period of European trade—Cannanore, Tellicherry, Mahé, and Badagara (Hamilton, ed. 1727: 369–371). Pepper and other spices were exported from inland villages probably from Roman times, but villages were virtually self-sufficient for food until the mid-eighteenth century. After that time the Mysoreans' roads permitted greater import of goods both from the coast and from Mysore, and greater spatial mobility. In the nineteenth century cash-crop farming for export increased, as did imports of

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

439 [161] [241] [464] [496] food and other goods. The population expanded and much formerly waste land was brought under cultivation as gardens for the production of coconuts, pepper, cashew nuts, and cinnamon. Higher in the mountains Europeans developed estates of tea, coffee, and spices, which attracted wage labor from villages to the west. The development of the steamship, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and the entry of railways into Kerala in the 1860's were significant events in this process.

Political and Economic Systems

564 [566] Traditionally, a hierarchy of the major Hindu castes was present as in Central Kerala, except that large areas of North Kerala had no Pulayas or agricultural serfs (*ibid.*, I: 148). Nambudiri Brahmans were fewer than in Central Kerala, but they controlled a small number of temple estates and claimed religious superiority over the Nayar rulers. Muslims were the dominant trading population of the ports and inland trading centers.

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631 The mountainous terrain, heavy rainfall, poor communications, sparse population, and comparatively low productivity made political centralization more difficult than in Central Kerala. The ancient Kolattiri kingdom was divided into chiefdoms and villages in a manner similar to the later kingdom of the Zamorin, but judicial control was perhaps never as well centralized as in the Calicut kingdom. From the fourteenth century, when the Zamorins captured most of the Arab trade, the Kolattiri kingship lost some of its former power. The kingdom disintegrated into three smaller, virtually independent kingdoms—Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad—plus a number of small border chiefdoms of uncertain allegiance (*ibid.*, I: 343–344). Each of the three North Kerala kingdoms probably had a population of between 150,000 and 250,000, in contrast to the Calicut kingdom, which seems to have numbered some 600,000 to 720,000 (see note 5, page 473).

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175 648 634 635 After 1500 each of the North Kerala rulers sought the help of one or another of the mutually hostile European and Middle Eastern trading powers, thus maintaining a state of fragmentation until the Mysorean conquest. In the struggles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries some new Nayar chiefs also arose with mushroom rapidity on the basis of European support and gained partially autonomous sway over small groups of villages. Political and social mobility among Nayar aristocrats was thus more marked in North Kerala than in the more stable central kingdoms. Indeed, a North Kerala proverb re-

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
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marks that "When a high-caste Nayar becomes ripe, he turns into a king."

Low productivity and poor communications perhaps made the exaction of tribute more difficult than in Central Kerala, and this fact, plus the uncertain nature of trade, made the local rulers perennially short of funds. This is probably the reason why, although they were trained for warfare in gymnasia in their villages, Nayars were not regularly conscripted into a national army. Instead, they merely fought sporadically on behalf of local chiefs. Further, chiefs and village headmen were insufficiently strong to bring all the land under their control. Their domains were larger than those of Nayar commoners, but most commoner Nayar property groups were independent small landlords in their own right within their villages. Since they were not full-time warriors and since in many areas they had no serfs, Nayar commoners also did part of their own cultivation on their small estates. Part of their land, however, they leased to Tiyyar tenants as in Central Kerala. The polluting castes of village servants had the same rights and spatial distribution as in Central Kerala. In general, the economic processes of reciprocity and redistribution in villages proceeded in a comparable manner.

As independent warrior-cultivators, the Nayar commoners were not divided into separate castes of retainers owing allegiance as vassals and *kānam* tenants to different kinds of lords. Most villages were nominally under Nayar village headmen. In villages of the Kottayam and Kadattunad kingdoms, both the headman's lineage and those of the Nayar commoners belonged to a large caste called Nambiars, who appear to have intermarried throughout the kingdom. Although of the same general caste as commoners, and not forbidden by religious law from intermarrying equally with commoners, Nambiar village headmen's lineages tended, however, to intermarry only with each other or to take wives only from the commoners, occasionally giving their own women in marriage to chiefs or Brahmans. Chiefs claimed a higher caste rank as Samantan Nambiars, and royalty as Kshattriyas. These aristocratic lineages conducted hypergamous marriages with each other and with Nambudiris as in Central Kerala.

Judicial processes were somewhat less centralized than in the Central kingdoms. At least in theory, grave crimes and civil disputes in urban centers seem to have been tried in royal courts, but most civil disputes inland were apparently tried by local chiefs. Under the chiefs, caste assemblies of neighborhoods took care of crimes against religious law as in the Central kingdoms. Murder among Nayars

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

until the second half of the nineteenth century. Their existence before 1750 seems to have been chiefly associated with conquest of land by chiefs. After the British conquest they became associated rather with the gradual expansion of the population to newly cultivated lands, and with the ability of men to acquire land as personal and freely marketable property.

Recent Developments in North and Central Kerala Contrasted

The modern North Kerala practice, whereby a man acquires newly cultivated garden land and gives it to his wife and children, makes Nayar residence heterogeneous at the present time. My data come from a village of Kottayam division where, in 1948, the great majority of Nambiar men were small owner- or tenant-cultivators. It was found that out of 42 Nambiar houses, 23 (55 per cent) had been built by individual men and given to their wives and children. Only 45 per cent had been built in the traditional manner by a matrilineally related group of men for their taravād.

Regarding the constitution of households, it was found that 29 per cent were "traditional," avunculocal extended family households comprising matrilineally related men, their wives, and small children, with or without divorced or widowed mothers or sisters of these men; 48 per cent contained an elementary family with or without another relative of either husband or wife—a widowed mother, unmarried sibling, etc.; 14 per cent contained a widow or divorcee with her unmarried children; 7 per cent contained a segment of a lineage —a group of matrilineally related men *and* women of the Central Kerala type, with the men visiting their wives in other households; 2 per cent (1 house) contained a man whose wife had just died, and the unmarried children.

Taking the residence of the 53 married couples by household, it was found that 26 per cent lived in the traditional manner in the matrilineal home of the husband. Some of these husbands were kāranavans; others lived avunculocally with a mother's brother. Fifteen per cent lived duolocally as in Central Kerala, with the husband visiting the wife. At least half, however, were couples in which the wife had recently had a child and was only temporarily living in her natal home; she would later return to her husband's matrilineal home, thus bringing the total percentage of couples in the husband's matrilineal home up to about 33 per cent. Six per cent lived patrilocally in the husband's father's private house, while 4 per cent lived

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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In the south-east of Malabar, in the neighbourhood of Palghat, the Ônam games are of a rougher character, the tenants of certain jenmis (landlords) turning out each under their own leader, and engaging in sham fights in which there is much rough play. Here, too, is to be seen a kind of boxing which would seem to be a relic of the days of the Roman pugiles using the cestus in combat. The position taken up by the combatants is much the same as that of the pugiles. The Romans were familiar with Malabar from about 30 B.C. to the decline of their power. We may safely assume that the "3,000 lbs. of pepper" which Alarie demanded as part of the ransom of Rome when he besieged the city in the fifth century, came from Malabar.*

Before ending this very incomplete account of customs of the Nâyars, mention must be made of two more of these, both odd. Ever since Châraman Perumal departed from the west coast of India in A.D. 825, setting sail for Arabia and Mecca, having divided up his kingdom, His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore when ascending his throne says: "I ascend the musnud, and will rule until my uncle returns." The "uncle" is Châraman Perumal, the last sovereign of the west coast, who, having embraced the Muhammadan religion which was brought to his shores by Arab traders, proceeded to carry out a wild idea—so goes the legend—of receiving instruction from the Prophet himself! He never returned. To one princeling was given the territory now known as Travancore, and his surviving successor (through the female line of course) is the present Maharajah of Travancore. To another he gave Cochin, the ruler of which State also inherits through the female line. To the ancestor of the Zamorin of Calicut the Perumal gave no territory, as to the others, but he gave him his sword (it is still in existence) with the advice "to die and kill and annex." That he annexed is quite clear, as he was the sovereign not only of Calicut but of the country round about when modern Europeans first visited the west coast of India. Like the Maharajah of Travancore, the Zamorin repeats the formula that he rules until his uncle returns, but in his case it forms part of an elaborate and costly ceremony. The fort, which was the official residence of the Zamorin,

* See Madras Government Museum Catalogue No. 2, Roman Coins, by Mr. Edgar Thurston, Superintendent of the Museum.

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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therefore one belonging to the community at large—in South Malabar, at any rate. The system of inheritance through females as it obtains amongst the Nâyars, relieves the woman from that undignified position which she occupies throughout the civilized world as the personal chattel of her husband. It gives her a relative superiority, and she carries this elsewhere. Coitus haud ita fit ut supina mulier viro morem gerat, immo etiam supino viro insidens illa, facie in eum conversâ genibusque hic atque illic dispositis negotium illud perficere solet. Hanc veneris figuram feminis ineundiorem, atque idcirco ab iis vindicatam esse perhibent periti. The well-known *jape* by which Iago hoped to arouse Brabantio into activity would be altogether inapplicable here.

Two more excerpts from Mr. Gopal Panniker's little book will be made, with his permission, descriptive of the other two most important national or popular festivals of Malabar.

"THE VISHU FESTIVAL.

"Vishu, like the Onam and the Thiruvathira Festivals, is a remarkable event amongst us. Its duration is limited to one day. The 1st of Mêtam (some day in April) is the unchangeable day on which it falls. It is practically the Astronomical New Year's Day.* This was one of the periods when in olden days the subjects of ruling princes or authorities in Malabar under whom their lots were cast, were expected to bring their New Year's offerings to such princes. Failure to comply with the said customary and time-conscerated demands was visited with royal displeasure resulting in manifold varieties of oppression. The British Government finding this was a great burden pressing rather heavily upon the people, obtained as far back as 1790, a binding promise from those Native Princes that such exactions of presents from the people should be discontinued thereafter. Consequently it is now shorn of much of its ancient sanctity and splendour. But suggestive survivals of the same are still to be found in the presents (explained further on) which tenants and dependants bring to leading families on the day previous to the Vishu.

"Being thus the commencement of a New Year, native superstition surrounds it with a peculiar solemn importance. It is believed that a man's whole prosperity in life depends upon

* See Madras Museum Bulletin, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 57 and 58.

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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APPENDIX B.

[127] At the last moment I have received from Dr. E. Hultzsch, Ph.D., the Government Epigraphist, the following excerpt from the number of the *Epigraphia Indica* which is now under publication, and which with his permission I add to this monograph. It is interesting evidence of the old martial spirit of the Nayars:—

"According to an inscription of the 14th year of his reign (=A.D. 1083–84) the Chola King Kulôttuṅga I. 'conquered Kuḍamalai-nâḍu, *i.e.*, the Western hill country (Malabar), whose warriors, the ancestors of the Nayars of the present day, perished to the last man in defending their independence.'—*South-Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. III, p. 130.

Translation of an Inscription of the 14th Year of Kulôttunga I. at Tirukkaḷukkunram.

Line 27.—'While all the heroes [1] in the Western hill-country (Kuḍamalai-nâḍu) ascended voluntarily to heaven,' etc.—*South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. III, p. 147.

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[192] 1 In Malayâlam *châvêr* (Tamil *sâveru*) means 'one who has elected to die, *moriturus*.'

8:Panikkar I-4,5 (no date) 1918 AWII Kerala AWII Nayar

vocal music, etc., goes on. One by one the guests soon depart, and the bridegroom stays in his wife's house for a few days. It must be remembered that the Nāyars are a strictly matrilocal community, though the custom shows a laxity in these days.

The *Sambandham* customs are not the same all over Malabar. They vary considerably in details, but the principle is the same all over. *Sambandham* in itself, though recognised as legal, has not the binding effect of a proper marriage. It is in theory dissoluble at will, and often it happens that, due either to misunderstanding or quarrel, either of the parties breaks off relations. In such a case, the marriage is deemed to have ended, and the aggrieved party can, without further formality, marry anybody else. The legal position is slightly altered in Travancore. By the Nāyar Regulation Act of 1912 it was enacted that if a man wants to break off his marriage relations with a woman to whom he was united by a properly conducted *Sambandham* he has to give her six months' notice and provide for the maintenance of her children by him (till they attain their twelfth year, unless the mother marries in the meantime). But this law has very little influence, and marriages and divorces go on in the same free fashion as before. In British Malabar, there is the Malabar Marriage Act of Sir C. Sankaran Nayar, the present Educational Member of the Imperial Government, by which a Nāyar entering into a *Sambandham* with a Nāyar woman can, if the parties choose to do so, register their union as a marriage to which ordinary marriage laws apply. This has been found very ineffective, for in the last twenty years during which it has been in force only six marriages have been registered, and all of them have been in the family of its distinguished author.

Before such laws came to be enacted (and to a very great extent even now) there has been singular freedom of marriage and divorce among the Nāyars. The men that a girl could possibly marry were strictly restricted by certain conditions. A Nāyar girl is not allowed to contract a marriage with men of a lower subcaste. She can marry either in her own subcaste or in castes above hers. She is not allowed to marry one who is not at least two years older than herself. She cannot marry anyone who shares pollution with her (that is descended from the same ancestress on the maternal side, however remote). There are cases when the common ancestress lived nearly four hundred years ago, but still her descendants are supposed to be so closely related in blood as to preclude matrimonial relationship of any sort.

The husband visits the wife's house after dinner, and this does not cause any particular inconvenience, as, till lately, marriage was restricted to people of one's own village or of its immediate neighbourhood. But in these days the tendency is strongly patrilocal, though ancient and aristocratic families still refuse to send their ladies out of the house. To keep within one's own house is considered to be a specially aristocratic privilege.

The question of polyandry among the Nāyars is a much debated point. This can be said with certainty: there has been no authenticated case of it at least for the last fifty years.

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persuaded themselves, that no nation could handle it with such skill and dexterity.[1] Such trained young men became the guards of some king or lord, and so faithful and obedient were they, that they had no hesitation to die for him when required. They were the greatest and worst enemies of the Portuguese, and did a great deal of mischief to them by sea. Some of them had a naked rapier or cutlass in their right hand and a great target in their left, made of light wood, some again were armed with bows and venomous arrows upon their shoulders; and while moving about, they made a great noise by knocking the hilt of the rapier against the target in order that they might be heard. Others carried long pikes, some pecus with the match readily lighted, and had the best locks that could be found in all Europe. They knew how to use them, and the Portuguese had no advantage over them. Wherever they went, they carried their arms both by day and night.[2]

"They went into battle almost naked, threw javelin with equal address backward and forward, and drew the bow with such skill that their second shaft often split the first. Their extraordinary agility made them the terror of every combat in forest or jungle. On the smallest provocation they prepared themselves for death, and having done so, one would hold his ground against a hundred. Those attached to the person of the prince made it a point of honour not to survive him."[3]

Their military dress and mode of fighting.

"The military dress of the Nayar is a pair of short drawers and his peculiar weapon is an instrument with a thin but very broad blade hooked towards the edge like a bill-hook or gardener's knife, and about the length of a Roman sword. The hooked instrument, the inseparable companion of the Nayar whenever he quits his dwelling on business, pleasure or for war, has no scabbard, and is usually grasped by the right hand as an ornamental appendage during the time of peace and used for destruction in war. When the Nayar employs his 'musquet' or his bow, the weapon already described is fixed in an instant by means of a catch in the waist belt, with the flat part of the blade diagonally across his back; and it can be

1. Johnstone in his relations of the most famous kingdom in the world, 1611.
2. Voyages of Linschoten to the East Indies,
3. Graul Reise nach Ost Indien,

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Thus did the Nayars as a warlike race play a very important part in the history of *Kerala* during the middle ages. Their weapons and modes of fighting thereafter underwent many changes under the influence of the Portuguese and the Dutch, who introduced western arms and tactics into the then existing art of war, when also the Nayars proved equal to the occasion. Labourdanais, who distinguished himself in the storming of the little town of Mahe, bore the brunt of many a Nayar onslaught, and had therefore opportunities of forming a just estimate of their work. Major Munro, who was instrumental in the storming of that little town in 1761, met the Nayar troops in the field, and thus described their mode of fighting: "One may as well look for the needle in a bottle of hay as any of them in the day-time, they lurking behind the sand-banks and bushes, except when we are marching towards the fort, when they appear like bees out in the month of June besides which they point their guns well and fire them also." Dr. Buchanan, who under the orders of Lord Wellesley journeyed through Mysore, Malabar and Canara, spoke of them in the same strain. When Hyder Ali invaded Malabar, they committed terrible havoc on the Mysoreans. "The Nayars are the military class of Malabar," writes Col. Wilkes, who was struck with their pluck and agility. "They are perhaps not exceeded by any nation on earth in their high spirit of independence, but like all persons stimulated by that spirit without the direction of discipline, their efforts are uncertain, capricious and desultory." The last event in which they showed their military valour was in the rebellion of the Pychee Raja of Kurumbranad. With the fall of the Portuguese and the Dutch, and the conquest and annexation of Malabar by the English East India Company, the Nayars have almost lost their warlike characteristics, through successive generations of peace and have now become attached to the land. Even writing in 1855, Captain Drury contrasts the Nayar's effeminate disposition with the martial valour of his forefathers. He does not bear transplantation. He now prefers a quiet swing in the verandah or a lounge under a tree, chewing betel. Unlike his ancestor, he is becoming more and more domesticated. The Nayar population has greatly increased and a large majority of them are not very affluent; and among these physical deterioration is noticeable.

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like other conventionalities, is an accident, and the Nayar women are as chaste and faithful as their neighbours, just as they are as modest as their neighbours, although their national costume does not include some of the details required by conventional notions of modesty."[1] Nevertheless, the existing state of things in the community does not quite satisfy the sentiments of the educated public. There was a loud cry for reform and legislation in British Malabar. The Madras Government appointed a commission, which, after its protracted labours, enacted a permissive law, Act IV of 1896. The main provisions of the Bill are, that, when a *sambandham* has been registered, it shall have the incidence of a legal marriage; that is to say, the wife and children shall be entitled to maintenance by the husband or father respectively and to succeed to half his self-acquired property if he dies intestate, while the parties to such a *sambandham* cannot register a second one during its continuance. The law does not extend to this State. The fewness of the number of marriage registrations shows how little the Nayars, as a community, have availed themselves of it. The principal objections urged against it are: (1) that it ignores caste and customary restrictions on marriage and thereby interferes with caste; (2) that it sanctions what according to social usage is deemed to be incestuous marriage; (3) that marriage before the Registrar is obnoxious to the people, and that no one has any scruples about going through the customary form; (4) that the provisions relating to divorce are ill-adapted to the present state of society in Malabar, and that revelations of conjugal infidelity in public courts are the most repulsive to the people; (5) that the provisions relating to the giving of the whole of the self-acquired property to wives and children amount to violent interference with the customary law. The following extract from Moore's Malabar Law and Customs is well worth the perusal[2]:—

From the date on which the Act in Malabar came into force up to 31st March 1910, one hundred *sambandhams* have been registered. "In his last report of the working of the Act, the Registrar-General states, that the number of notices of

1. Logan's Manual of Malabar, Vol. I, page 136.
2. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 83.

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and one with less than that number was called a *Désavázhi*. There were in those days no taxes levied from the people, and the chief from the Rajas down to the *Désavázhi* possessed demesne lands for their support which were cultivated either by themselves or leased to *kudiyáns* or tenants; but the following were the chief sources of income, based upon feudal rights and privileges. The rulers levied custom duties upon exports and imports, taxes upon houses of fishermen, tradesmen and professional men. Criminal fines went to fill their coffers, and succession duties were levied upon the estates of deceased persons, especially those who held offices of State or rights over land. Outcast women were made a two-fold source of profit. Lewd adulterous women were made over to the chiefs with a premium for the trouble of looking after them, and the chiefs used in turn to sell the women to foreign merchants as slaves or wives to *Chettis*. The estates of persons who died without heirs were escheated, nor could an heir be adopted without the Raja's consent, for which a fee was generally levied. Protection fees from strangers and merchants were levied under various names and customary presents were the ruler's dues on occasions of feast or funeral. Wrecks were his perquisites, and various animals his monopoly. Concerning the former, Marco Polo wrote about the kingdom of Eli, "And you must know that if any ship enters the estuary and anchors when she has been bound for some other port, they seize her and plunder the cargo. They say that you are bound somewhere else, and it is God that sent yo' hither to us, so we have a right to all your goods, and think it no sin to act thus. This naughty custom prevails all over the Provinces of India, to wit, that if a ship be driven by a stress of weather into some other port than that to which it is bound, it is sure to be plundered. But if a ship came bound originally to the place, they received it with all honour and gave it protection."[1] The custom of the taking of ships and cargoes lasted down to recent times, until the English factory at Tellicherry entered into agreements with three of the country-powers for the exemption of English vessels from such seizures.

Among the animals that became the property of the Raja were cows with three or five dugs, cattle that has killed a man or other animals, cattle with a white spot near the corner of

1. Yulles Marco Polo, page 374.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

said, by dividing it up between the rajas of Travancore, Cochin, Kolattiri, Kurumbranad, Walluvanad and others. To the Zamorin of Calicut, who was later to become so famous, he left only his sword with the recommendation to "die, kill and annex". The latter potentate and his descendants took the injunction seriously and very quickly in the two following centuries, the 14th and 15th, assumed a leading role on the Kerala stage. They encouraged Arab trade in spices and other commodities, and by their scrupulous honesty and absolute security of commerce, obtained and held it for fully two hundred years.

It was then that the first Europeans arrived on the scene. The Portugese came to beign with, in an attempt to break the Moors' monopoly of Far Eastern products. Coming into conflict with their Mohammedan rivals and with their protégé the Zamorin, they successfully supported the raja of Cochin against these and thus gained a footing on the coast while taking over command of the sea. They were only forced out by the Dutch in the 17th century (although they still hold Goa further north, to this day), and the Dutch in turn were superseded by the British and the French, who settled respectively at Tellicherry and at Mahe, from which fortified places they fought each other for supremacy in the pepper trade for another two centuries.

In the 18th century, the Mohammedan rulers of Mysore descended on Kerala and, after forcibly converting a great number of its inhabitants to Islam, annexed large tracts of it. Tipu Sultan, however, the ally of Napolean, fell foul of the British East India Company, which eventually defeated him at Seringapatnam in 1792. British supremacy in Kerala dates from that year and a system of farming out revenue to the local rajas was instituted. It proved to be a mistaken method of collection, and was the cause of the serious rebellions of Kerala Varma, Raja of the Padinnara Kovilagam of Kottayam, the Pazhassi raja, otherwise known as Pychy raja, in 1797 and from 1800 to 1805. With their termination, the British took over direct administration of Malabar, while leaving Cochin and Travancore to that of their rajas. They were to keep it until 1947 when India was given her independence.

Two years later, the States of Travancore and Cochin were merged to form a United State under the Maharaja of Travancore. In 1953, France finally relinquished her hold on Mahe, and in 1957, the whole coastal region from South Canara to Cape Comorin became the State of *Kerala* which we know today. The name has been variously interpreted as meaning either "land of coconut trees" or "land of the Cheras", an ancient Hindu dynasty of south India.

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having children by them. The latter were born into the Nayar caste, and to all practical purposes were untouchables for their fathers. But, in fact, Nayars thus procreated were perfectly conscious of the high caste blood which flowed in their veins and which made them only slightly less important than their exalted sires. A feeling of close relation to the Brahmins was thus definitely generated in them, giving them the self-assurance and self-assertion in public affairs that distinguishes them from their fellow Indians to this day. Others, and especially Arabs, have also contracted *sambandham* unions with the Nayar women of Malabar. Such unions are equally possible with *marumakkathayam* Tiya women, and between members of the same endogamous caste, when regular marriage is not possible.

Although it appears to be a very loose way of setting up a household (there is no other ceremony than the possible offering of a piece of cloth by the man to the woman, and the relation can be broken off informally at any time), in actual fact there were, and still are, very few cases of *sambandham* unions not lasting. The main drawback seems to have been the feeling of frustration in the male partner that he was unable to do anything for, or leave anything to, his children. British legislation attempted to remedy this state of affairs by the Malabar Marriage Act IV of 1896 which provided for such unions to be registered and stipulated that when they were, they would be looked upon as regular, legal marriages entitling the "wife" and children to maintenance by the "husband" and father, and to inheritance of half his self-acquired property should he die intestate. Inheritance from father to son in matrilineal families has since been further legalized by the Madras *Marumakkathayam* Act of 1933, but its provisions really apply more specifically to the regular marriages of the *marumakkathayam* practising people. In accordance with them, the property of the *tarawads* can now be divided up between the members, if they so wish.

A specific custom of Kerala, which has never failed to intrigue outsiders, is still very much observed today, namely the ceremony of *tali-kettu-kalyanam*, or of the tying of the *tali*. The latter is a small piece of gold, through which a thread has been strung, and which is tied round the neck of a girl before she attains maturity. Speculation as to what is the significance, origin and function of this ritual has been rife over the years, but at least opinions do not seem to differ on the point that it represents some form of symbolic marriage, preceding and perhaps preparing the way for a real one, or for entry into a *sambandham* union

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conclusions, to which I may add those observations of mine in the field that appear to me to bear out his contentions most fully.

In 1792, after the defeat of Tipu Sultan of Mysore by the British, the latter took over the direct administration of Malabar. As we have seen, they began by farming out the collection of revenue to the local rajas; very soon, however, they found this system unsatisfactory and took over the task themselves. A corps of British administrators was formed and put in charge of the work; from then onwards, cultural conditions in Kerala underwent a very great change.

The term "Europeanism" has been used to cover all those aspects of Western foreign influence which have since then profoundly affected the local people's lives. This foreign influence has been followed since 1947 by recent reforms due to the policy of the present Congress Party Government of India, although these, too, have been inspired to a large extent by contact with the West. Today, a new force is making itself felt. Since the last elections in 1957, Kerala has been ruled by a government of the Communist Party, whose accession to power is, however, too recent for me to be able to give here any appreciation of the alterations it is seeking to impose on the State.

"Europeanism" includes many varied and subtle innovations in the everyday life of the inhabitants of Kerala, some of which can be put down as gains and some of which, on the contrary, must be considered as losses. Aiyappan has attempted to establish a balance sheet of these for the Irava community (to be found on p. 126 of his book *Iravas and Culture Change*). As far as the whole of the Kerala population is concerned, it can be said that the term mainly covers such principal items as the following.

First of all, the displacement of traditional rulers and their replacement by European officials. This took place throughout the area, and only the maharajas of Cochin and of Travancore were retained; later, a resident responsible to the Madras government was attached to them. The new officials were scant respecters of caste. While obliged, by force of circumstance, to take into consideration the innumerable compartments into which native society was divided and subdivided, they nevertheless were inspired, in their dealings with the people and in their choice of assistants, by the Christian ideals of equality and individual merit, whereby they brought about a revolution in traditional methods of government. Only Islam, with the arrival of the Arab traders on the Malabar coast nearly one thousand years before, can be said to have brought anything similar to bear on the static outlook of the people;

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e) by mutual consent evidenced by a registered instrument attested by not less than two witnesses."

Art. 12: "A polyandrous marriage performed after this Act shall be void." [595]

Chapter III. Maintenance and Guardianship. Three articles.

Chapter IV. Succession.

Five articles on testamentary succession.

671 428

Art. 26: "For the purpose of succession there is no distinction between the self-acquired property and the ancestral property or between the property of a male and that of a female except as otherwise provided by this Act."

Eight articles on Intestate succession.

Art. 28: "Property in respect of which a Thiyya has died intestate devolves upon the wife or husband or upon those who are of the kindred of the deceased in this order and according to the rules herein prescribed."

Art. 29: "When the intestate had left more than one widow, the distribution of inheritance referred to in sections 30, 31, 32 and 33 shall be made as if there is only one widow, all the widows together taking equally one widow's share."

Art. 30. "When the intestate has left a widow, if he has also left a son, or lineal descendant of a son, a share equal to that of a son shall belong to the widow."

Eleven articles on distribution of intestate's property.

Art. 39, (b): "If some of them (lineal descendants) are his (the intestate) sons and others are his daughters, each daughter shall take a half of the share of a son if the intestate is a male, and if the intestate is a female all children shall take equally."

It should be remembered that this legislation is that of a former princely state which has ceased to exist as a separate unit. Today, since the coming into being of the State of Kerala, made up of Malabar, Mahe, Cochin and Travancore, this Act has been superseded by the provisions of the India Code in force now in the whole of the Indian Republic. In accordance with the stipulations of the Code, a larger share of inheritance is granted to daughters and widow than was formerly allowed by the Cochin *Makkathayam* Thiyya Act. [648]

[PP 240-574 not Processed]

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company of Nāyars for the honour of the Valluvanad Rāja. And probably the frantic fanatical rush of the Māppillas on British bayonets, which is not even yet a thing of the past, is the latest development of this ancient custom of the Nāyars. The martial spirit of the Nāyars in these piping times of peace has quite died out for want of exercise. The Nāyar is more and more becoming a family man. Comparatively few of them now-a-days even engage in hunting." According to an inscription of the King Kulōttunga I (A.D. 1083-84), he conquered Kudamalai-Nadu, *i.e.*, the western hill country (Malabar), whose warriors, the ancestors of the Nāyars of the present day, perished to the last man in defending their independence.*

The following description of the Nāyars at the beginning of the sixteenth century is given by Duarte Barbosa.† "The Nairs are the gentry, and have no other duty than to carry on war, and they continually carry their arms with them, which are swords, bows, arrows, bucklers, and lances. They all live with the kings, and some of them with other lords, relations of the kings, and lords of the country, and with the salaried governors, and with one another. They are very smart men, and much taken up with their nobility. . . . These Nairs, besides being all of noble descent, have to be armed as knights by the hand of a king or lord with whom they live, and until they have been so equipped they cannot bear arms nor call themselves Nairs. . . . In general, when they are seven years of age, they are immediately sent to school to learn all manner of feats of agility and gymnastics for the use of their weapons.

* E. Hultzsch, South-Indian Inscriptions, III, 2, 1203.

† Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar. Translation. Hakluyt Society, 1866.

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595 law as by a kind of tacit convention, it scarcely ever happening that it exceeds six or seven. The woman, however, is under no obligation to admit above a single attachment, though not less respected for using her [201] privilege to its utmost extent. If one of the husbands happens to come to the house when she is employed with another, he knows that circumstance by certain signals left at the door that his turn is not come, and 564 departs very resignedly." Writing about the same time, 595 Sonnerat * says that "these Brâhmans do not marry, but have the privilege of enjoying all the Nairesses. [648] This privilege the Portuguese who were esteemed as a great caste, obtained and preserved, till their drunkenness and debauchery betrayed them into a commerce with all sorts of women. The following right is established by the customs of the country. A woman without [851] shame may abandon herself to all men who are not of an [604] inferior caste to her own, because the children (notwithstanding what Mr. de Voltaire says) do not belong to the father, but to the mother's brother; they become his legitimate heirs at their birth, even of the crown if he is king." In his 'Voyages and Travels', Kerr writes as follows. † "By the laws of their country these Nayres cannot marry, so that no one has any certain or acknowledged son or father; all their children being born of mistresses, with each of whom three or four Nayres cohabit by agreement among themselves. Each one of this cofraternity dwells a day in his turn with the joint mistress, counting from noon of one day to the same time of the next, after which he departs, and another

* Voyage to the East Indies, 1774 and 1781.

† R. Kerr. General History and Collection of Voyages and Travels, 1811, History of the Discovery and Conquest of India by the Portuguese between the years 1497 and 1525, from the original Portuguese of Herman Lopes de Castaneda.

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comes for the like time. Thus they spend their time without the care or trouble of wives and children, yet maintain their mistresses well according to their rank. Any one may forsake his mistress at his pleasure; and, in like manner, the mistress may refuse admittance to any one of her lovers when she pleases. These mistresses are all gentlewomen of the Nayre caste, and the Nayres, besides being prohibited from marrying, must not attach themselves to any woman of a different rank. Considering that there are always several men attached to one woman, the Nayres never look upon any of the children born of their mistresses as belonging to them, however strong a resemblance may subsist, and all inheritances among the Nayres go to their brothers, or the sons of their sisters, born of the same mothers, all relationship being counted only by female consanguinity and descent. This strange law prohibiting marriage was established that they might have neither wives nor children on whom to fix their love and attachment; and that, being free from all family cares, they might more willingly devote themselves entirely to warlike service." The term son of ten fathers is used as a term of abuse among Nāyars to this day.* Tīpū Sultān is said to have issued the following proclamation to the Nāyars, on the occasion of his visit to Calicut in 1788. "And, since it is a practice with you for one woman to associate with ten men, and you leave your mothers and sisters unconstrained in their obscene practices, and are thence all born in adultery, and are more shameless in your connections than the beasts of the field; I hereby require you to forsake these sinful practices, and live like the rest of mankind."†

595 564 [851] [604] [578] [648]

* Wigram, Malabar Law and Custom, Ed. 1900.

† T. A. Kalyanakrishna Aiyar, Malabar Quart. Review, II, 1903.

In a recent note, Mr. K. Kannan Nāyar writes*: "Almost every Nāyar officer in Government employ, when applying for leave on account of the kettukalliānam of his daughter or niece, states in his application that he has to attend to the 'marriage' of the girl. The ceremony is generally mentioned as marriage even in the letters of invitation sent by Nāyar gentlemen in these days. . . . This ceremony is not intended even for the betrothal of the girl to a particular man, but is one instituted under Brāhman influence as an important kriya (sacrament) antecedent to marriage, and intended, as the popular saying indicates, for dubbing the girl with the status of Amma, a woman fit to be married. The saying is Tāli-kettiu Amma āyi, which means a woman has become an Amma when her tali-tying ceremony is over."

In summing up the evidence collected by him, Mr. L. Moore states† that it seems to prove beyond all reasonable doubt that "from the sixteenth century at all events, and up to the early portion of the nineteenth century, the relations between the sexes in families governed by marumakkattayam were of as loose a description as it is possible to imagine. The tāli-kettu kalyānam, introduced by the Brāhmans, brought about no improvement, and indeed in all probability made matters much worse by giving a quasi-religious sanction to a fictitious marriage, which bears an unpleasant resemblance to the sham marriage ceremonies performed among certain inferior castes elsewhere as a cloak for prostitution. As years passed, some time about the opening of the nineteenth century, the Kērala Mahatmyam and Keralolpathi were concocted, probably by Nambūdris, and false and pernicious doctrines as to the obligations laid on the

* Malabar Quart. Review, VII, 3, 1908. † *Op. cit.*

significance. The former typifies the attempt which these maidens make in order to hang themselves on these instruments, and destroy their lives in consequence of the lamented demise of their sexual deity Kāmadēvan. The beating on the water symbolises their beating their chests in expression of their deep-felt sorrow caused by their Cupid's death."

Yet another important festival, Vishu, is thus described by Mr. Gopal Panikkar. "Vishu, like the Ōnam and Thiruvathira festivals, is a remarkable event among us. Its duration is limited to one day. The 1st of Mētam (some day in April) is the unchangeable day, on which it falls. It is practically the astronomical new year's day. This was one of the periods when, in olden days, the subjects of ruling princes or authorities in Malabar, under whom their lots were cast, were expected to bring their new year's offerings to such princes. Failure to comply with the customary and time-consecrated demands was visited with royal displeasure, resulting in manifold varieties of oppression. The British Government, finding this was a great burden, pressing rather heavily upon the people, obtained as far back as 1790 a binding promise from those Native Princes that such exactions of presents from the people should be discontinued thereafter. Consequently the festival is now shorn of much of its ancient sanctity and splendour. But suggestive survivals of the same are still to be found in the presents, which tenants and dependents bring to leading families on the day previous to the Vishu. Being the commencement of a new year, native superstition surrounds it with a peculiar solemn importance. It is believed that a man's whole prosperity in life depends upon the nature, auspicious or otherwise, of the first things that he happens to fix his eyes upon